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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON SADDAM HUSSEIN'S CAPTURE

Summary

-- A lead story in all papers today, December 18, highlights the fuel truck explosion in Baghdad yesterday killing a disputed number of Iraqis. Another lead story talks about the anticipated speech by Israeli Prime Minister Sharon today, in which he will reveal the aspects of his "Unilateral Steps" plan. The lead story in Al-Arab Al-Yawm quotes "a security source close to the occupation authorities" in Iraq as saying that Saddam Hussein was handed over by Mohammad Al-Musalat, a close person to Saddam, after drugging him and leading the Americans to him.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The Arab tragedy: intellectuals and fighters in the service of tyranny"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (12/18): "It is not destined upon the Arab world to remain within the realms of three tragic options, occupation, tyranny and terrorism. It is shameful that there is in the Arab world intellectuals and fighters who support tyranny and tyrants on the pretext of resisting the occupation, or who support occupation and usurpation on the pretext of resisting terrorism and tyranny. The real intellectual and fighter must not have any leniency with those three germs that are eating away at the Arab body.. The fourth option for the Arab world is the option of freedom, democracy, justice, respect for human dignity, development and progress. It is the option that fighters and intellectuals must work for and never give up on in favor of tyranny, terrorism or occupation, whatever the pretext.. They are neither intellectuals nor fighters as long as they support oppression, tyrants and terrorists just to spite the United States. They are intellectuals those who support the occupation on the pretext of combating terrorism and tyranny. It is a single war and it is a comprehensive war that must be fought by the Arabs against occupation, tyranny and terrorism all together."

-- "Who tries who?"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (12/18): "Capturing Saddam alive has put America in a dilemma. What does it do with him? Should he be tried domestically by an authority that has no legitimate authority and has no right to form courts and issues laws, or internationally and in accordance with international law?.. If the trial is internationally-held, the point of contention would be that the accusing party is the one that should be put on trial, for it is an aggressor that occupied a sovereign and independent state that does not exercise terrorism, does not own weapons of mass destruction and does not threaten the security of the United States. How could someone defending the independence of his country be put on trial, while the one launching an illegitimate war gets away?"

-- "The Saddam Hussein phenomenon between dream and reality"

Columnist Raja Talab writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (12/18): "Many Arabs still do not want to believe that it was Saddam Hussein they saw on TV a few days ago. Those shocked people do not want to believe what they have convinced themselves of, namely that Saddam Hussein is an invincible hero who struck Israel with missiles and who defied the Americans. Many Arabs do not want to believe that they have been deceived and they have been living in illusions.. The phenomenon of Saddam

Hussein grew strong because of the state of defeat and frustration that the Arabs suffered from since the nineteen forties.. Those who are living in the illusion are not willing to believe that the occupation of Kuwait had nothing to do with the liberation of Palestine, but rather it was the illusion of power and arrogance. They were not ready to understand that a person who kills his people with chemical weapons, suffocates them and turns Iraq into a big prison can never be a person who liberates others, and that a person who brings destruction to his own country cannot give others freedom, progress and prosperity.. They do not want to believe because they do not want to abandon their dreams. The frustrated Arab mind is still looking for a hero and when it does not find it, it creates an illusionary one.. The real Saddam did not do what those people wanted the dream Saddam to do. Therefore, they quickly resorted to self-consolation by saying that the one they saw is his look-alike, or that he was drugged, or that the Americans used cinema tricks. The important thing is that they do not wake up from their mirage and from facing the truth that simply says a tyrant cannot be a liberator, a professional killer cannot be human, and tyranny is the power of the weak."

GNEHM